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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Living God, we bless Your Holy Name. We praise You for the abundance of Your love and for Your peace that transcends understanding. Lord, even in the midst of the cacophonous, You permit us to hear Heaven's harmonies.

Today, inspire our lawmakers to depend on Your grace. As they rely on Your promises, empower them to obey Your precepts, finding in Your wisdom a lamp for their feet and a light for their path. Sustain them with Your sweet presence when they walk on weary roads, and continue to bless them with the constancy of Your love. Send Your Spirit to bring quiet and serenity into their souls.

We pray in Your marvelous Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PAUL). The majority leader is recognized.

UNITED KINGDOM'S NEXT PRIME MINISTER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today the Queen of England will ask Theresa May to form a government and

become the United Kingdom's next Prime Minister.

Our allies, the British, have stood with us through the toughest of times and remain a valued ally and partner. This was true under Theresa May's predecessor as Conservative Party leader and Prime Minister—that is David Cameron, to whom we also send warm regards today—and it was true under the preceding Labour governments of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown as well. We have every expectation it will be true under her leadership as well.

From what I hear, May is tough, savvy, and she has promised to seek unity and “a strong . . . positive vision for the future” of her country.

So on behalf of the Senate, allow me to wish her the best in the days to come.

LEGISLATION BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today the Republican-led Senate will have two opportunities to make a difference for the American people by passing the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act conference report and the bipartisan, bicameral aviation agreement. Both bills are the result of months of hard work from colleagues on both sides. With continued cooperation, we can move these measures across the finish line now.

The CARA conference report is a comprehensive legislative response to the prescription opioid and heroin epidemic which is devastating our Nation. By increasing prevention, treatment, recovery, and law enforcement tools, CARA can help prevent more people from struggling with addiction to begin with and it can help foster long-term healing for those already struggling with addiction.

It is no wonder it has earned the backing of nearly 250 groups, from local hospitals like the Kent County

Memorial Hospital in Rhode Island to law enforcement groups like the Fraternal Order of Police and antidrug groups like Voices of Hope in my own State of Kentucky.

At a time when drug overdoses claim 129 American lives every single day, it is painfully clear we need to do more, and we need to do it now. That is why this Senate majority has provided more than double the funding the previous majority provided for opioid-related issues. That is why this Senate majority has made passing this comprehensive response a priority.

I particularly want to thank those who made this moment possible, Senator PORTMAN, Senator AYOTTE, Senator GRASSLEY, and Senator ALEXANDER. I also appreciate those on the Democratic side who worked very hard on this bill, such as Senator WHITEHOUSE and Senator KLOBUCHAR. I know they are all proud to support it today.

We can also pass the bipartisan, bicameral aviation bill, which is an important step to ensuring safety and security for American travelers. Recent terror attacks, such as those at airports in Brussels and in Istanbul, underline the significance of this bill, which represents the most significant airport security reform in a decade.

By shoring up security for international flights coming into the United States, by enhancing vetting for aviation employees, and by improving security in prescreening zones that are often vulnerable, the airport security bill before us will take more steps to protect airline passengers.

The bill will also take steps to keep Americans safe from active shooter threats by authorizing more so-called VIPR teams. It will also make sure airports are better equipped to respond and disarm threats that come their way by bolstering resources and training for security personnel.

In addition to these smart security enhancements, the bill also includes a number of key items to improve safety

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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in our skies, such as ensuring that unmanned aerial vehicles don't interfere with emergency response and improving mental health screening for pilots. It includes a number of consumer protection provisions, too, such as refunds for lost or delayed baggage and improvements to travel for disabled passengers and parents with small children.

I especially thank Senator THUNE for guiding this critical bill through the legislative process and for his work to include even more security provisions to keep Americans safe.

Every Senator should support this bill today so we can send it to the President's desk immediately. With cooperation now, we can finish our work on these critical bills. With continued cooperation in the coming days, we will be able to finish our work on other important legislation as well.

For instance, yesterday we voted to go to conference on the Energy Policy Modernization Act, which represents the first broad energy legislation to pass the Senate since the Bush administration. By updating and reforming our energy policies and infrastructure, this bill can help Americans save more energy, produce more energy, and pay less for energy.

This much needed legislation wouldn't have been possible without the resilient efforts of the Energy Committee chair, Senator MURKOWSKI, and the ranking member, Senator CANTWELL, to move it forward. I am pleased the Senate took the next step to advance this bill, and I hope we can arrive at a final agreement in the near future.

Unfortunately, there are areas where our colleagues have blocked critical progress on issues such as Zika control funding and support for our veterans. Here was the headline in a newspaper this week: "Reid: Senate Dems will block Zika funding again." "[W]hich means," the article explained, "there will be no further avenues to pass a funding bill to combat Zika for the rest of the summer."

Democrats used to say Zika was an imminent threat. Now they are threatening to extend the filibuster of the funding we need to fight Zika and protect women's health. Why? It seems clear enough. They think dysfunction works well for them politically, so they are trying to manufacture some regardless of who gets hurt in the process. They have tried to muddy the issue with extraneous arguments and half-truths, but they just don't stand up to serious scrutiny.

Let us examine a few of the things they have said about this compromise conference report. Our Democratic friends pretend it would underfund Zika. Actually, it contains the exact \$1.1 billion funding they just voted for last month.

Democrats pretend it contains partisan offsets. Actually, the offsets have bipartisan buy-in. Two of the three offsets have explicit bipartisan support.

The third takes unspent money that was set aside for health care in the territories but cannot be used and actually uses those funds for—get this—health care in the territories.

Democrats pretend the compromise conference report would weaken clean water protections. Actually, it temporarily—just temporarily—waives a duplicative paperwork provision that Democrats themselves call "unnecessary for the protection of our environment" and a "waste of taxpayer dollars." This temporary provision would only apply to pesticides already approved—already approved—by the EPA, and it represents the only real way to commence with the kind of anti-mosquito efforts we need—efforts the EPA Administrator herself assures us are not only safe but "perhaps the most important tool we can use right now"—as the vaccine takes a period of time to develop.

Democrats also pretend the compromise conference report would prohibit funding or deny access for birth control. Actually, it provides more resources for health care, including preventive care, than the Zika bill Democrats voted for just last month. This compromise bill directs those health care dollars to the very places you would expect, such as hospitals, public health departments, community health centers, and Medicaid.

Democrats are now upset because a political supporter doesn't get a special carve-out, so they are demanding an earmark for this partisan group as the cost of ending their attack on women's health and their blockade of anti-Zika funding. Of course, Democrats would like us all to ignore the fact that the very same partisan campaign organization would not have been able to access these Medicaid funds in the President's Zika request either.

So it is hard to decide which of these excuses is the most disingenuous. Maybe it is the false claim this bill cuts funding for veterans. It actually increases veterans funding to record levels, by the way. Just as Democrats are pushing a partisan proposal to provide political cover on Zika, it actually would leave veterans funding behind.

So, look, I think we get this. Democrats have a partisan interest in blocking critical anti-Zika funding. That is what is going on here, but Americans are asking them to please just put politics aside for once and think of the national interest. Does anyone—anyone—seriously believe pregnant mothers care about manufactured squabbles over offsets and earmarks and duplicative paperwork? They want Washington to kill mosquitoes and they want them to do it now. They want to see a vaccine developed—and quickly. They want to see their unborn babies protected from a devastating virus that can have lifetime consequences. What they do not want to see, what they are not interested in observing, is one more manufactured partisan excuse from our colleagues over here on the other side.

To quote the top Democrat on the Committee on Appropriations, "Mosquitoes don't care about the budget process." She is right.

The time for games is over. This is our chance to pass anti-Zika funding, and there is only one way to do it. Vote yes on the compromise Zika control and veterans conference report before us and send it on down to the President.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

LEGISLATION BEFORE THE SENATE AND JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Republican leader celebrates the opioid legislation and the FAA bill, but both are missed opportunities. There is no funding in the opioid bill. There were editorials all over the country yesterday about that. I read here on the Senate floor, it is in the RECORD, about The New York Times saying it was really wrong to try to claim credit for doing something on opioids when there is no money to do it.

The FAA bill—I will talk about that in a little more detail in a little bit—is another missed opportunity to do what is right to help, to help the Republican leader keep his word.

CARA, the opioid legislation, has no real funding to solve the real problem.

Over the last week, Democrats have exhausted every avenue to try and work with Republicans on a Zika funding measure. Democrats had the audacity to expect the Republican leader to live up to his promise in April of bipartisan work on Zika. This is what the Republican leader said in April:

We all are very much aware that this is a serious crisis. We'll be working with the administration, with Democrats.

But his actions, especially over the last couple of weeks, clearly illustrate that he was never really interested in a bipartisan solution. For example, the President offered a meeting with Senator McCONNELL, Speaker RYAN, Secretary Burwell, and Director of OMB Shaun Donovan, to work on the Zika crisis. The Speaker and the Republican leader refused that meeting. We offered to reintroduce the Senate's bipartisan Zika compromise from what we sent to the House. We would do it again as a freestanding bill. That bill had 89 votes. Eighty-nine Senators voted for it.

We have offered Republicans legitimate compromises in the hopes they would join us at the negotiating table, but it is clear that they don't want to stay in DC. They want to rush to Cleveland and wave the flag for Donald Trump. That is why they are imposing imaginary deadlines on Zika legislation.